



THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20580

June 8, 2010

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

Thank you for your inquiry about whether the Federal antitrust laws prohibit companies from meeting together to discuss the oil spill in the Gulf and the best ways to minimize the environmental and economic damage the oil spill is causing. As you know, the antitrust laws are designed to promote competition and protect consumers from the negative effects of anticompetitive conduct. Although we must always be watchful when competitors collaborate, industry efforts to work with Federal officials and provide expertise to combat this ecological disaster are unlikely to raise concerns under the antitrust laws, and we would be unlikely to challenge such an effort.

The impact of the oil spill appears likely to be an enormous tragedy for the people and economy of the Gulf and we would like to help any way that we can. If it would be helpful, the Commission stands ready to provide more detailed and expedited guidance regarding any meetings or resulting proposals. Please let us know if we can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Leibowitz".

Jon Leibowitz  
Chairman